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ABSTRACT

Recognizing that no single evaluation instrument or procedure could provide a genuine measure of teaching effectiveness, the University of Southern Mississippi devised an evaluation system specifically designed for composition that consists of four components: student evaluation, observation of classroom activity, evaluation of a set of marked papers, and assessment of writing assignments for the course. The items for the student evaluation were selected with an eye toward whether students could legitimately make the judgment called for. The content for the classroom observation form is almost entirely drawn from the suggestions of the Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee on Teaching and Its Evaluation in Composition. The first page of the form for evaluating a set of marked papers asks the teacher to provide the background information, in addition to a description of the assignment itself, necessary to evaluate a set of papers and to evaluate someone else's evaluations of those papers. The evaluation of a series of writing assignments consists of questions appropriate for (1) scrutinizing each assignment before the assignment is made, (2) facilitating the revision of assignments and the collection of analytical data for the summary accompanying a set of assignments, and (3) serving as a guide for an evaluation team or for the teacher preparing a self-evaluation or a summary statement concerning the cumulative nature of the course. (HOD)

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INSTRUMENTS FOR EVALUATING TEACHING IN COMPOSITION CLASSES: ADAPTATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Detroit, Michigan

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INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTRUMENTS

Recognizing the need to more objectively document excellence in teaching, we are presently trying to develop an evaluation system specifically for composition.

Most evaluation systems in use are not suitable for composition courses--we have no prescribed body of facts to feed students, and our well-prepared lectures are seldom the focus of the class meeting. An ideal system would consider student opinion on those factors which they could legitimately evaluate, would take into account the parts of the class where the real work goes on--student writing and teacher response to that writing, would measure student progress in their facility with the whole writing process and not merely a final product. Our embryonic system is a step toward that ideal.

Realizing that no single evaluation instrument or procedure could provide a genuine measure of teaching effectiveness, we are using several:

- Student evaluation
- Observation of classroom activity
- Evaluation of a set of marked papers
- Assessment of writing assignments for the course
- Comparison of pre- and post-tests of student writing
- Teacher self-evaluation

What follows is a brief description of the first four components of the evaluation system, with the instrument used to record or guide the evaluation. The greatest influence on these instruments is the report in **College Composition and Communication** (Vol. 33, no. 2, May 1982, pp. 213-229) from the CCCC Committee on Teaching and Its Evaluation in Composition. Their suggestions have been modified to suit our situation and to facilitate their use. Revisions on and procedures for these instruments come from a University of Southern Mississippi composition committee on evaluation: Dixie Elise Hickman, David H. Roberts, Marsha K. Smith, and David M. Wheeler.

These are working papers; we have been using these instruments for only two semesters, on a limited scale. We do not yet have enough data on the results to establish a norm for satisfactory performance. If our experience can be of further help to you, my name, address, and phone number are included with this packet.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF COMPOSITION TEACHING

This student evaluation focuses on the teacher rather than the course. Items were selected with an eye toward whether students could legitimately make the judgment called for. For example, although students may validly evaluate how well-prepared the instructor seems, they are in no position to judge how well the instructor actually knows the subject.

Questions 1-10 are drawn from the suggestions from the CCC Committee on Teaching and Its Evaluation in Composition. Questions 11-20 are from the CAFETERIA appraisal system developed by the Measurement and Research Center of Purdue University. Our university makes this system available for faculty use, and a university committee has chosen these ten questions for student voice in the award for excellence in teaching.

Questions 21-25 provide demographic data by which the results of the questionnaires might be evaluated. For example, questionnaires on which the students admit to being absent six or more times might be eliminated from the statistical analysis.

Questions 26-30 offer explanations of the responses in questions 1-20 and provide supporting detail for summaries and recommendation reports.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF COMPOSITION TEACHING

STUDENT'S NAME_____ INSTRUCTOR _____

CLASS_____ SECTION _____DATE_____

Answer the following questions by circling the appropriate number or letter in the right-hand column.

For questions 1-20, mark your answers Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Undecided (3), Disagree (4), or Strongly Disagree (5).

		Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1.	My instructor's evaluation of my writing seemed fair.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My writing was treated with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My instructor returned papers quickly enough to benefit me.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I understood what my instructor was talking about.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	In class I could disagree with my instructor if I wanted to.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I can use my instructor's comments to improve my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I understood my instructor's comments about my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I understood my instructor's standards for grading.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My instructor was willing to confer with me outside of class.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I understood my instructor's directions for assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	My instructor has an effective style of presentation.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My instructor seems well-prepared for class.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	This course builds understanding of concepts and principles.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My instructor is actively helpful when students have problems.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I feel free to ask questions in class.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	The stated goals of this course are consistently pursued.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Grades are assigned fairly and impartially.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I would enjoy taking another course from this instructor.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	My instructor explains difficult material clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Overall, this instructor is among the best teachers I have known.	1	2	3	4	5

Answer Questions 21-25 by circling the letter or number that best completes the blank in the statement.

21.	I was absent approximately ____ times.	0-1	2-3	4-5	6+	
22.	I was late for class approximately ____ times.	0-1	2-3	4-5	6+	
23.	The grade I expect in this course is ____.	A	B	C	D	F
24.	I met with my instructor outside of class ____ times.	0-1	2-3	4-5	6+	
25.	I visited the Writing Lab ____ number of times.	0-3	4-6	7-9	10+	

On the back of this form, answer Questions 26-30 in your own words.

26. What are your instructor's strengths?

27. What are your instructor's weaknesses?

28. What suggestions would you give your instructor for improvement?

29. What were the best things about this course?

30. What suggestions would you give the English Department for improving this course?

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

The content of this form is almost entirely from the suggestions of the CCCC Committee on Teaching and Its Evaluation in Composition.

The form itself is designed to make information easy to fill in and easy to locate. The "objective" 1-5 scale for points an observer might consider matches the scale required by the Purdue Cafeteria system, is easy to mark and more informative than a Yes-No choice, and could be quantified to please certain evaluators.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION DATA SHEET

Teacher _____ Observer _____

Date _____ Class _____ Meeting time _____

Pre-visit information (to be filled in by the teacher):

What assignment did you give for today's class?

What do you plan to do during class?

How does today's class activity fit into the larger framework of the course structure?

Are there any particular things you would like me to give special observation?

Questions for the observer to consider during the classroom visit:

		strongly agree				strongly disagree
1.	The focus or goal of the class is clear.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The focus or goal, as it emerges during the class, is congruent with the assumptions, objectives, and plans stated by the teacher in the pre-visit information.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The classroom activities are related directly to writing.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The discussion in class focuses directly on the writing process, the uses of effective language, or the evaluation of writing.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The activities seem appropriate for the goals of the class.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The activities seem appropriate for the students' background and preparation.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	What is being taught makes sense as advice to writers about writing.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The teacher is audible to everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The teacher's language is appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The teacher encourages students' questions.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The teacher responds to questions and comments in a positive, constructive way.	1	2	3	4	5

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION DATA SHEET, PAGE 2

Post-visit summary, to be completed by the observer and shared with the teacher:

Any visitor to a class can create a change in the normal atmosphere and interaction of the group. Did you or the teacher notice any particular constraints?

What strengths does the teacher demonstrate?

What weaknesses does the teacher demonstrate?

What specific strategies can the teacher use to improve weaknesses?

Summary, further suggestions and recommendations:

EXAMINING A SET OF MARKED PAPERS

Response directly to student writing is at the heart of instruction in composition. While a face-to-face conference between writer and instructor, with notes in writing, is probably the most effective method for delivering this feedback, the size of most composition classes and the teaching load reduce the frequency of such conferences. Students and teachers must rely on comments written on the papers.

The first page of the "Form for Evaluating a Set of Marked Papers" asks the teacher to provide the background information, in addition to a description of the assignment itself, necessary to evaluate a set of papers and to evaluate someone else's evaluations of those papers.

Most of the points for the evaluator to consider are taken from recommendations of the CCCC Committee on Teaching and Its Evaluation in Composition. Items added address the instructor's accuracy in diagnosis and legibility. The 1-5 scale was added for the evaluator's convenience in summarizing and to provide quantifiable data if needed.

FORM FOR EVALUATING A SET OF MARKED PAPERS

Teacher _____ Evaluator _____

Date _____ Class _____

Background data on the assignment (to be completed by the teacher):

Attach a clear description of the assignment as it was given to the students.

What is the source for the assignment?

What were your goals for the assignment (i.e., what concepts or structures were being emphasized)?

If the context for the writing assignment has not been specified in the assignment itself, how were the students instructed to shape the context of their writing, to define their role as writer, the purpose of their message, and their audience?

How was the assignment made (e.g., presented orally, textbook assignment, handouts, chalkboard, overhead, etc.)? What kinds of examples were given?

How was the assignment carried out (e.g., all writing from initial assignment to finished copy was done during the 50-minute class period; students prepared a draft outside of class, received editorial advice from peers and instructor, then wrote the final copy outside of class)?

Are there any unusual marking strategies or grades on particular papers that need to be explained?

FORM FOR EVALUATING A SET OF MARKED PAPERS, PAGE 2

Points to consider when evaluating a teacher's responses to student papers (to be completed by the evaluator and shared with the teacher):

		strongly agree				strongly disagree
1.	Correction symbols or handbook reference symbols are easily deciphered.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The written comments are models of clear prose.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Some comments address the strengths in the paper.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The comments identify objectively what the students have and have not done.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The comments suggest ways to improve the writing either for a revision or a later assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The comments have a constructive tone.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The comments are accurate reflections of the paper's strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The number of comments is such that the student can assimilate them.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The comments make suggestions that are appropriate for the student's level of ability.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The comments are specific enough so that students can tell how they apply to their papers.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Comments, abbreviations, or handbook symbols are readable.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments or questions about the marking or grading of individual papers may be made on a separate sheet for the teacher to compare with the papers themselves.

Summary and Recommendations:

EVALUATION OF A SERIES OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

As support for teaching competency, instructors are frequently asked to supply a set a materials used in a given course. In a composition course, the writing assignments would make a large portion of those documents. The questions that follow are guides for evaluating writing assignments.

The first set of questions, "Questions to Test an Assignment," are almost exactly the recommendations from the CCCC Committee on Teaching and Its Evaluation in Composition. A question on source and use of the source has been added. This set of questions is appropriate for scrutinizing each assignment and might most profitably be used by the teacher before actually making the assignment.

The second set of questions is primarily for the teacher to use following each assignment. These questions facilitate revision of assignments and the collection of analytical data that might be used in a teacher's summary accompanying a set of assignments or in a self-evaluation.

The third set of questions, "Questions for Reviewing the Series of Assignments in a Course," turn attention to the cummulative nature of the course. These questions might be offered as a guide for an evaluation team or as a help to the teacher preparing a self-evaluation or a summary statement for an evaluator.

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Questions to Test an Assignment

By what means and with what accompanying explanations or models will the assignment be given to students?

Has the assignment been clearly stated?

Will the students know for sure what they are expected to do? Is there opportunity for questions?

Does the assignment guide the student in selecting materials, identifying pertinent questions and issues, and choosing perspectives on a subject? If the student is not so guided, is there a reason why?

Does the assignment reflect one or more goals of the course?

If the assignment is for writing in class, can students complete it in the time allowed?

Does the assignment create a clear role for the writer, purpose, and audience?

Is the assignment appropriate for students at this level?

If the assignment is drawn from a source other than the teacher, what is the source? Has the source assignment been modified? If so, how?

Questions to Evaluate the Success of an Assignment

Would you use this assignment again? Would you modify it?

Was the assignment successful? What factors seemed to play the greatest role in its success or failure?

Did the students and the teacher enjoy the assignment?

Questions for Reviewing the Series of Assignments in a Course

Is there a logical progression to the assignments?

Do the assignments guide students through a variety of methods of development?

Do the assignments provide a variety of purposes for student writing?

Do the assignments give students experience in writing for a variety of audiences?

Are the students given opportunities to choose their own topics, roles, and audiences?

Do the assignments lead the students to understand the relationship between the course and their other courses? between the course and the "real world"?